

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 EUR-08 ISO-00 SS-15 NSCE-00 AID-01
/032 W

-----058500 311412Z /43

P 311245Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8955
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 3085

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (DIGGS, CHARLES C.), CG
SUBJECT: CODEL DIGGS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU

1. SUMMARY: DURING MEETING MARCH 29, PRESIDENT MOBUTU EXPLAINED GOZ'S POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR PEACEFUL ZIMBABWE SOLUTION ENCOMPASSING ALL NATIONALIST FACTIONS. HE LAMENTED COOL "ATMOSPHERE" THAT HAS DEVELOPED AROUND OTHERWISE GOOD US-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF GOZ'S IMPLEMENTING REFORMS IN MOBUTU PLAN FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY. MOBUTU SAID HE WAS DETERMINED TO PURSUE PLAN AND POINTED TO NEW ASSISTANCE FROM DONORS (LONDON ACCORD, SAUDI AND UK GOVERNMENTS) AS EVIDENCE OF GROWING CONFIDENCE IN ZAIRE. END SUMMARY

2. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS, ACCOMPANIED BY STAFF DIRECTOR CHALLENGER AND AMBASSADOR, MET WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU FOR ABOUT ONE HOUR PRIOR TO DINNER HOSTED BY PRESIDENT AT HIS RESIDENCE. ALSO PARTICIPATING WERE FOREIGN MINISTER UMBA DI LUTETE AND VICE PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY NZONDOMYO.

3. CONGRESSMAN DIGGS FIRST EXPLAINED PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP, NOTING
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THAT WHILE ZAIRE IS NOT AS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS AS SOME OTHER STATES, IT WAS NEVERTHELESS AN IMPORTANT, INFLUENTIAL COUNTRY WHOSE VIEWS WE VALUED.

4. ADDRESSING SOUTHERN AFRICA, MOBUTU STRESSED ZAIRE'S LONG RECORD OF EXTENDING FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT TO ALL NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS. LONG BEFORE MOZAMBIQUE'S INDEPENDENCE, FOR EXAMPLE,

ZAIRE HAD HELPED EQUIP AND TRAIN MACHEL'S FORCES. AS FOR ZIMBABWE, ZAIRE HAD CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED AN EVEN-HANDED POLICY IN DEALING WITH THE CONTENDING FACTIONS. HENCE MOBUTU HAD MET PERSONALLY WITH ALL SIMBABWE NATIONALIST LEADERS AND RESPONDED AS BEST HE COULD TO THEIR APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE. AT LAST YEAR'S OAU SUMMIT, ZAIRE HAD OPPOSED RESOLUTIONS CALLING FOR SUPPORT OF SOME MOVEMENTS AND EXCLUDING OTHERS. ZAIRE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT A SOLUTION MUST ENCOMPASS ALL MOVEMENTS, AND THAT IT MUST BE WORKED OUT BY THE ZIMBABWE LEADERS THEMSELVES RATHER THAN BY OUTSIDE FORCES. OTHERWISE, ZIMBABWE WOULD GO THE WAY OF ANGOLA, WITH ALL THE TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES THAT HAD ENTAILED.

5. MOBUTU THEN TURNED TO A SECOND MATTER HE SAID HE WISHED TO DISCUSS--US-ZAIRIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. HE NOTED THAT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, REGARDLESS OF WHICH POLITICAL PARTY WAS IN POWER IN WASHINGTON, HE WAS ALWAYS ABLE TO COUNT ON US FRIENDSHIP, SUPPORT AND COOPERATION. WHEN DURING THE STANLEYVILLE CRISIS IN 1967 MOBUTU HAD APPEALED FOR US HELP, PRESIDENT JOHNSON SENT TWO C-130S THE VERY NEXT DAY. MOBUTU STILL CONSIDERED OUR RELATIONS TO BE GOOD AND APPRECIATED THE IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE THE US CONTINUED TO PROVIDE ZAIRE. HOWEVER, UNLIKE IN THE PAST, THE "AMBIENCE" SURROUNDING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS SINCE THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION TOOK OVER HAD GROWN COOLER. THIS CHANGE IN ATMOSPHERE, IN TONE, WORRIED MOBUTU AND WAS DIFFICULT TO COMPREHEND. MOREOVER, OTHER LONG-TIME FRIENDS OF THE US IN AFRICA SENSED THE SAME CHANGE IN THEIR OWN RELATIONS WITH THE US AND THEY SHARED CONFIDENTIAL

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MOBUTU'S CONCERN.

6. IN AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN MORE PRECISELY WHAT HE MEANT, MOBUTU CITED A DEMARCHE MADE TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO ZAIRE DURING THE SHABA INVASION. THE SOVIET HAD RESPONDED THAT WHILE HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT ROLE THE ANGOLANS WERE PLAYING IN THE ATTACK, AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY WERE RIGHT OR WRONG, ZAIRE SHOULD KNOW THAT ANGOLA WAS THE SOVIET UNION'S FRIEND AND WOULD THEREFORE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ITS HELP. THAT, MOBUTU SAID, WAS THE KIND OF UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT ZAIRE USED TO BE ABLE TO COUNT ON FROM THE US. NOW, HOWEVER, OUR SUPPORT SEEMED LACED WITH RESERVATIONS, AS WAS SO EVIDENT TO ALL DURING THE SHABA CRISIS. MOBUTU USED AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE THE REDUCTIONS IN US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD PROPOSED TO CONGRESS THE SAME LEVEL FOR FY78 AS HAD BEEN VOTED FOR FY 77, THIS WAS STILL MUCH LOWER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS AND WAS INTERPRETED BY OTHERS AS DIMINISHING US SUPPORT FOR A GOOD FRIEND. (CONGRESSMAN DIGGS INTERJECTED THAT THE FY 78 LEVEL COULD HAVE BEEN EVEN LOWER HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE ON AFRICA).

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7. REFERRING TO MOBUTU'S CONCERN ABOUT ATMOSPHERE, CONGRESSMAN DIGGS ACKNOWLEDGED THERE WAS SOME CRITICISM CONGRESS VIS-A-VIS ZAIRE. HE EXPLAINED THAT CONGRESS WAS AWARE THAT NOT ALL OF THE EFFORTS AND PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOZ IN THE PAST HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT, AND IT WAS THEREFORE UNDERSTANDABLE IF SOME SKEPTICISM SHOULD DEVELOP REGARDING THE GOZ'S WILL AND ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS INCLUDED IN THE MOBUTU PLAN. WHAT COULD HE, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE AFRICA SUB-COMMITTEE, CARRY BACK TO HIS COLLEAGUES BY WAY OF ASSURANCES ON THIS MATTER?

8. MOBUTU SAID HE WAS NOT ONLY COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN BUT WAS FULLY DETERMINED TO DO SO. IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT HE WOULD PERMIT A PLAN BEARING THE NAME OF ZAIRE'S CHIEF OF STATE TO FAIL. THERE WAS AMPLE EVIDENCE OF THE GOZ'S SERIOUSNESS AND DETERMINATION. FOR EXAMPLE, ZAIRE HAD HONORED ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER THE LONDON ACCORD BY PAYING UP PAST-DUE INTEREST TO THE PRIVATE BANKS AND SETTING ASIDE MORE THAN \$80 MILLION AGAINST PRINCIPAL. AT THE SAME TIME, MOBUTU ASSERTED, THERE WAS ENCOURAGING EVIDENCE THAT ZAIRE'S EFFORTS WERE CREATING INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY. SHORTLY, THE PRIVATE BANKS WOULD COMMIT AS MUCH AS \$216 MILLION IN NEW
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CREDITS. JUST THAT DAY SAUDI ARABIA HAD INFORMED THE GOZ OF ITS DECISION TO MAKE AVAILABLE \$66 MILLION FOR ROAD AND RAIL-ROAD CONSTRUCTION. AND THE UK HAD RECENTLY AGREED TO REPAIR THE BRIDGES THROUGHOUT THREE OF ZAIRE'S REGIONS. ALL OF THIS SERVED TO DEMONSTRATE WIDESPREAD READINESS TO ASSIST ZAIRE WHICH, IN TURN, REFLECTED CONFIDENCE IN THE GOZ'S OWN CAPACITY TO EFFECT ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

9. COMMENT: MOBUTU'S EXPLANATION OF HIS POSITION ON ZIMBABWE WAS SOMEWHAT LACKING IN CLARITY AND PRECISION. WHILE HE DID NOT EXPLICITLY CONDEMN OR SUPPORT AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, HE CLEARLY INDICATED HIS CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. MOBUTU'S COMMENTS ON US-ZAIRIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS, WHILE AT TIMES ALSO SOMEWHAT NEBULOUS, WERE CONSISTENT WITH HIS CURRENT PERCEPTION OF, AND UNHAPPINESS WITH, BEING ACCORDED LESS PRIORITY THAN BEFORE IN OUR APPROACH TO AFRICAN ISSUES. THE \$66 MILLION INPUT BY SAUDI ARABIA HAS BEEN SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED BY THE GOZ AND IS REPORTED IN MORE DETAIL SEPTEL.

10. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN APPROVED IN DRAFT BY CODEL DIGGS. CUTLER

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